

The Discipline of Organizing in iSchools – Collaborative and Digitally Enhanced Teaching of a Core Subject

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Abstract

The workshop centers on a book, “The Discipline of Organizing” (MIT Press, 2013) that proposes a unified trans-disciplinary perspective on one of the core subjects for iSchools: information organization and retrieval. The printed book and several digital/ebook versions will be the focus of a case study in collaboratively developing and maintaining a teaching resource that supports cooperation across the different iSchools. The workshop will present the concept of the “Discipline of Organizing” (TDO), several examples of TDO in teaching, and invites participants to develop a vision for a collaborative teaching environment and process.

Keywords: information organization, information retrieval, education

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1 Introduction

The TDO project was conceived in response to the question “what is an iSchool” and the corollary questions about what the iSchools should be teaching, i.e. a common core. The “Discipline of Organizing” proposes as a trans-disciplinary framework the concept of an Organizing System, an intentionally arranged collection of resources and the interactions they support. The book discusses the main functionalities common to all organizing systems, i.e. selecting resources, organizing them, designing resource-based interactions, and maintaining and adapting the resources and their organization over time. TDO draws on the concepts and case studies from many fields, most notably library and information science, computer science, informatics, cognitive science, law, economics, and business.

Initiated at Berkeley, TDO ultimately involved faculty from 4 different iSchools, totaling 17 co-authors. TDO's concepts and terminology are intentionally interdisciplinary and abstract to demonstrate the applicability to many different domains. Endnotes categorized by discipline (i.e. LIS, law, cognitive science) augment the book to enable more intense engagement from different disciplinary perspectives. The book embodies numerous other innovations in book design and implementation, including interactive self-study quizzes, annotation capabilities, and user contributed content. TDO is already in use at more than a dozen schools in the fall of 2013.

2 Purpose and Intended Audience

The workshop proposes to bring together (a) people teaching from TDO, many who have not have met in person before, to discuss and learn from each other's experiences and (b) people teaching classes in information organization and retrieval that would be interested in collaborating in this joint conceptual and educational endeavor.

Participants will discuss and exchange experiences in teaching core concepts of information organization and retrieval from different disciplinary perspectives and explore inter-school collaboration in a shared digital teaching environment. The main questions to be explored are:

1. How can we create a “living” book that moves beyond the main text (while maintaining its integrity) by augmenting the content with student- and lecturer-generated disciplinary perspectives generating “versions” adapted to specific classes or schools?
2. How can we develop a resource-sharing environment, which provides teaching tools (not only a “text”book”, but digitally enhanced learning and collaboration features) moving iSchool education into the digital world with all its capabilities?

3 Goals or Outcomes

The main goal of the workshop is to develop a shared vision on how to teach important core subjects. This includes bringing together people from various backgrounds to develop the emerging vision that this could evolve into a collaboratively maintained textbook and online course managed and delivered by the iSchools as a shared resource.

Outcomes, case studies and sample teaching content will be provided on the TDO web portal (tdo.berkeley.edu).

4 Proposed Format

The workshop will include organizer presentations and invited short talks from TDO lecturers as well as discussion sections.

Proposed schedule:

0:00-0:30 Introduction of workshop attendees

0:30-0:45 Introduction to TDO as a project

0:45-1:10 Principles of TDO

1:10-1:30 TDO's Design Innovations

1:30-1:40 Break

1:40-2:30 TDO in teaching

- Using TDO as core text (TDO-centric syllabus) (10 mins., UC Berkeley)
- Using TDO as core text in a particular track of a course (10 mins., UNC)
- Using TDO as a supplemental text (augment disciplinary/specialized literature) (30 mins., Humboldt)

We will discuss how the TDO concepts map to current LIS (and other disciplinary) curricula.

2:30-2:45 Break

2:45-3:30 Collaboratively maintaining a text book

We will present 2 innovative teaching strategies already implemented:

- Using TDO in MOOCs (UNC)
- Using TDO for collaboration: the annotation experiment (UCB / UNC)

We will discuss how to develop and share resources in a joint digital environment:

- for teaching (annotations, quizzes, assignments, exams)
- for disciplinary perspectives (endnotes, annotations)

5 Conclusion

Information organization and information retrieval are core subjects every iSchool curriculum. TDO is an initiative to develop a common vocabulary across schools and disciplinary perspectives. The development of the book was already a collaborative process between different schools, and the workshop will encourage more collaboration, not only from a disciplinary, but also from an educational perspective. Both disciplinary and educational visions will be discussed and a new vision of publishing (paper and different ebook versions, enhancing with disciplinary perspectives) explored.